Name of Provider: Luther King House Educational Trust
UKPRN: 10009612

TEF Year Four provider submission

Provider Context

Luther King House (LKH) is a small provider with about 120 students studying at both UG and PG levels. It is a federal institution combining on one site and in a common teaching programme what were previously separate Free Church denominational theological colleges based in Manchester. With a history going back to the nineteenth century, LKH has an established record of delivering quality HE in an inclusive, diverse and ecumenical environment.

Our heart of our mission is:

- The preparation of persons for accredited ministry within the historic Free Church traditions.
- The provision of learning programmes for members of all churches and other interested persons.

To fulfil this mission we focus our work on the delivery of a BA and a MA programme in 'Contextual Theology', as well as providing opportunity for PhD research for a small number of students. This focus enables us to build quality and depth into our teaching, and to offer high levels of support and supervision to all who study at LKH. All programmes are validated by the University of Manchester.

Students at LKH come to study from all parts of England, partly as a result of selection processes within the church denominations represented at LKH. In any one year about a third might be expected to come from Manchester itself. There are a very small number of international students.

LKH has worked hard to develop a clear understanding of what learning and education should be all about, and we seek to ensure that this shapes our life as a community. Key themes are:

a) Taking **contextuality** seriously. We do not teach an abstract and generalised concept of church or faith which can simply be planted into each and every situation. Rather we seek to encourage the careful analysis of contexts, and the appropriate study of traditions which enable Christian disciples to act with fresh relevance in each new setting.
b) Developing **participatory** patterns of learning and of discipleship. We model ourselves as a learning community where both tutors and students are continuing to develop their understanding and engagement with ministry to church, community and world. The contribution of all is valued as significant.
c) Encouraging **inclusivity**. We work to optimise the inclusion of women and men, people of ethnic minority and majority origin, people of differing sexuality, people of differing learning experience and ability, and people from the full range of Christian traditions.
d) Emphasising **liberation** models of education. Learning is a journey of discovery shared by the whole community, where special attention is given to issues of justice, freedom and human rights. We draw heavily on resources which have emerged from oppressed communities and enable these to shape ministry to our own society.

These themes establish an ethos of welcome and engagement at LKH. There is a clearly established policy of widening access and participation in the learning provided, and in 2017-18 the statistical data indicates the following:

Gender:

	Female	Male
BA	60%	40%
MA	53%	47%

Ethnicity:

	White	Mixed	Indian	Black
BA	53%	0%	7%	40%
MA	86%	7%	0%	7%

	Average Age
BA	41
MA	48

Due to the small number of students involved, these figures can vary considerably from year to year (for example, in the previous year the MA cohort had only 43% white students), but this gives some indication of the diversity. Notably, almost all are mature students, reflecting the nature of the work that they will be going into when they complete study.

It is also worth noting that in 2017-18, 33% of BA students had English as an additional language and 33% also had one or more registered disabilities. This affirms our commitment to diversity, but clearly presents challenges to a small institution in meeting very specific needs (for example, two deaf students have successfully completed studies in the last three years).

When surveyed, the vast majority of students at LKH (around 75%) indicated that they have a clear and recognised ability to shape and influence the life of LKH. One student felt that *'this is where LKH excels'*, with another saying *'voices are heard and changes are made if needed'*. This reflects the strong sense of participatory and inclusive learning that takes place.

Teaching Quality

Due to the fact that LKH is a small provider, the metrics available through the TEF are very limited. There are no flags and only occasional indicators that point to our strengths and weaknesses. However, LKH is able to draw on its own data and attempt to provide narrative illustration of the impact of its policies and practices.

The quality of teaching, assessment and feedback, and academic support is highly regarded by students, and this is affirmed by the benchmarked metrics.

In response to the NSS statements

1. Staff are good at explaining things.
2. Staff have made the subject interesting.
3. The course is intellectually stimulating.
4. My course has challenged me to achieve my best work.

100% of students at LKH either definitely agreed or mostly agreed. This was true for both F/T and P/T students, and their comments made on the survey forms included the following:

> *'The tutors are fully committed to ensuring you produce your best possible work and are available to support and advise when required.'*
> *'This course has reignited my desire for learning. This has most definitely been because of the teachers.'*
> *'The teachers all appear to really enjoy teaching their subjects, and this, I feel, makes the students enjoy learning more.'*

The comments on staff reflect the impact of initiatives to encourage ongoing development and wider involvement. Our staff are not only research active, but also actively engaged in the kinds of

ministry that will be the responsibility of students when they complete their studies. In other words, they are themselves practitioners (and expected to be so) and this enriches the teaching that is offered.

The NSS also records the high percentage of positive responses to issues of assessment and feedmark. The percentages are of those students who definitely or mostly agree with the statements:

Marking and assessment has been fair	100%
Feedback on my work has been timely	100%
I have received helpful comments on my work	91.67%

These results are for F/T and P/T students and are considerably above the averages for the sector.

This evidence of the strong affirmation of the quality of teaching, feedback and support is backed up by internal data. Students provide feedback on all modules studied, responding to a range of questions to determine how satisfactory the quality and appropriateness of the teaching is, and the vast majority receive satisfaction scores above 80% with many above 90%. These are analysed by the Programme Leader and Staff Development Officer, and where there are issues that require attention, these are identified and addressed with the tutor concerned.

The internal data is supported by external reviews. The external examiner commented that, *'Generally the marking was thorough and well done and feedback was helpful and constructive; the best practice is very good indeed.'* The most recent QAA review stated that*, 'Students were generally very complimentary about the quality of academic staff, and confirmed that they use a wide range of teaching and learning methods. Students spoke highly of the practical experience that staff brought into the teaching and learning process.'* Again, LKH is aware that improvements can always be made, and processes are in place to ensure that any drop in our high standards are identified and addressed.

The style and pattern of teaching and assessment assists in ensuring high quality. Teaching groups are small (a maximum of 15-20), using interactive methods of engagement, and the use of continual assessment enables students to develop their research skills and pursue areas of personal interest within the field of contextual theology.

As already indicated, the diversity present within the LKH community and the commitment to widen access and participation does present challenges. These centre on two overlapping groups of students: those who begin study with lower entry qualifications, and those who have English as an additional language. Our data shows that such students unsurprisingly achieve lower average marks (often in the 40s rather than the 50s or 60s), and as a result a number of steps have been taken in the last three years to provide support and assistance. This includes a programme of study skills support concentrated in the early weeks of the programme but extending throughout Level 4, and ongoing English language teaching. It is difficult to measure the impact of the steps that have been taken due to the small numbers involved, but it is worth noting that in 2017-18 those students who entered the programme with qualifications below Level 3 averaged marks above 50 for the first time. There is as yet little evidence of similar improvements for those with English as a second language, but the teaching offered has been reviewed and made more robust, and progress continues to be monitored.

Learning Environment

LKH is a small purpose-built college that offers teaching rooms, bedroom accommodation, a library and resources centre, a restaurant, offices and a chapel all on one site. It is built around a small quad and there is full disability access throughout. Steady and continual improvements have been

made to the facilities, and most recently these have included refurbishment of bedrooms and improvements to the IT provision.

The provision of appropriate learning resources is a vital way of supporting student development and achievement. The library specialises in theology and religious studies and contains over 30,000 books, pamphlets, DVDs and almost 300 journal titles. Access to ebooks and ejournals is also provided and students make increasing use of these. The library also includes a study area and open access computers. All students and staff have access to the library between the hours of 7.30 and 22.30 throughout the week.

LKH uses Moodle as its VLE. All staff are expected to make full use of it for all modules, enabling students to access a range of resources before and after each teaching session. They can also access all materials relevant to the programme they are studying, submit assignments, participate in discussion forums, and link through to the library search catelogues. Students are helped to make full use of this facility from the first day they arrive at LKH.

At LKH our aims are to bring together the rigours of academic study and critical thinking with the development of professional and reflective practice. We believe that in the field of theology and ministerial training, LKH pioneered this approach in the 1970s and we continue to build upon these aims with our current emphasis on contextual theology. This means that:

- All students are expected to have a context to draw upon as they engage with their learning programme. They will be involved with and committed to this context – whether it is ministering in a church or assisting with a community based project.
- The academic assignments encourage and enable engagement with that context. In this way students are help to become reflective practitioners, and recognise the links between their reading, study and practice.
- Staff meet with students to explore the effectiveness of the learning that is taking place. Each student has a Professional Development Plan that shapes and gives structure to those conversations, and they draw together context and current areas of study.
- Staff seek to model such patterns through their own research and contextual engagement. For example, LKH has recently partnered with other organisations to set up a Centre for Theology and Justice, which brings together leraning and reflection with campaigning and action around key social justice issues.

When students carried out its own survey for the QAA review, the concluding report stated:

> *'There is a consensus in the student body that the tutors are very supportive of the students in the process of learning. All the students that responded to the questionnaires send to them agreed that the support is above average. One student stated that the support was very good while another felt that the tutors are always available to support the students whenever students asked for support or needed support.'*

This reflects the fact that considerable attention is given at LKH to personalised learning and pastoral support. We believe that this is one of our key strengths and it is one that students continually want to affirm. The small numbers studying here mean that:

a) Staff are able to operate an 'open door' policy, fostering a sense of being a learning community together. Any student can approach a tutor for help and guidance at any time.
b) Attendance can be carefully monitored, and whenever a student is missing for more than one week, they are followed up.
c) Staff and students within each of the federated colleges meet together weekly, and this includes time for one-to-one tutorials.
d) A formal system of termly and annual reviews exists, enabling progress to be monitored and any pastoral concerns addressed. In practice, meetings between the personal tutor and each student take place almost weekly.

The NSS confirms the significant attention LKH gives to personalised learning and personal support, with all students definitely or mostly agreeing with the following statements:

I have been able to contact staff when I needed to	100%
I have received sufficient advice and guidance in relation to my course	100%
Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices on my course	100%

These percentages are considerably above the average for the sector. One students commented on the survey:

> *'I am happy with the quality of the course and members of the staff are really amazing. I feel good and secured when I am in Luther King House. Friendly people and the quality of the teaching are high.'*

Student Outcomes and Learning Gain

The are no flags shown for the core metrics related to outcomes and learning gain – notably the HESA data related to continuation and the DHLE data on employment and further study. Our metrics are often not reportable due to the small numbers involved. However, there are indicators both below benchmark figures (F/T 'Continuation' and 'Employment or further study') and above benchmark figures (P/T 'Employment or further study' and 'Highly skilled employment or further study') that can be commented on from the data we possess.

Continuation

The fact that the BA programme at LKH is small in size means that the details of each student are well known, and a careful record is kept of those who do not continue their studies and the reasons why this occurs.

The overall data for recent years is as follows:

	Number of withdrawals	Number of fails	% of registered students
2013-14	3	1	6.25
2014-15	1	0	1.61
2015-16	5	2	10.61
2016-17	8	0	10.67
2017-18	1	1	3.45

When the reasons for withdrawal are examined, the data shows that it is very rare for these to relate to the programme of study, the teaching, or the ability of the student. Withdrawals are almost always to do with individual or family circumstances, including financial issues. It needs to be remembered that the students at LKH are almost always mature with families, and this impacts on their studies in ways that they cannot always foresee. So, for example, in the year when we experienced the greatest number of withdrawals, three were due to financial circumstances (including late notification from the SLC that a loan would not be agreed) and three were due to extreme family circumstances (such as a major bereavement). A significant minority of students, although UK domiciled, do not originate from the UK and it is likely that these students have responsibilities for family members in other parts of the world, often in conflict zones. This will sometimes place considerable strain on their ability to study. Yet despite living complex lives, we would want to note that only a very small percentage of students do not complete their studies. Retention rates are regularly at 90% and above.

Employment

The focus of the LKH programmes is on preparing and equipping people for ministry, and close links are maintained with the relevant church denominations (potential future employers) to ensure that the training and formation provided is appropriate. However, the patterns followed can be varied and complex.

The recent data shows that all P/T students are employed or studying following completion of their programme of study at LKH. The majority of F/T students also find employment.

	Number of responses	F/T: employed/ studying	F/T: unemployed/due to start work	P/T: employed/ studying	P/T: unemployed/due to start work
2015-16	8	7	0	1	0
2016-17	20	6	4	10	0

Of those who report that they are not employed, this can be due to a number of factors. First, for some the process of finding ministry in a church can be a long process, involving complex negotiations. For example, a graduate may consider a move to another part of the country to take up a particular post, but as almost all our students are mature it means that family considerations may well cause a delay in concluding the arrangements. Second, a number of those who graduate from LKH have completed studies with the intention of serving their church and community in non-stipendiary ways. For example, they may be close to retirement and want to develop the theological skills necessary to lead a local congregation in its ministry to its community, but not be expecting to be employed. So while we believe we can show from the data that a high proportion of graduates from LKH do gain formal employment, it needs to be understood that for a small minority this is never their intention and for others it can be a delayed process.

We also have HESA data (though the numbers are inevitably small) indicating the breakdown between those whose occupations are classified as professional and non-professional for 2015-17:

	F/T	P/T
Professional/Managerial	5	9
Non-professional/Managerial	4	0

It is worth noting that a high proportion believe that their studies have prepared them well or very well for work or further study.

	Number of responses	Very well or well prepared for work	Very well or well prepared for study
2015-16	8	6	8
2016-17	20	18	18

Graduates were less sure that their programme of study had prepared them for being self-employed and starting their own business, but this is to be expected given the stated aims and purpose of learning at LKH.

Though the metrics are very limited, LKH has made increasing use of data to try to understand its own strengths and weaknesses, and also to take actions that can have real impact. The recent QAA review stated that:

> *'The team saw evidence of detailed data on performance and student module evaluations, and these are being processed at committee level to ensure effective teaching and learning. Data from module evaluation forms is analysed by the relevant Programme*

> *Leaders with trends highlighted at Programme Committee. Staff are also able to view the data to support their development.'*

LKH believes in excellence. We have students who achieve first class degrees and who go on to achieve academic success at higher levels. Yet our declared purpose is not only to offer learning opportunities to those whose academic capabilities are already well-established. We believe in widening education to students who, while they may not always achieve very high grades nor go on to professional forms of paid employment, will nevertheless have been helped to learn and grow beyond their expectations. At LKH they acquire training and skills that enable them to enrich both our communities and our society.